



Issue Date: July 15, 2021

Deadline for Question: July 26, 2021, 17:00 Belgrade time

Closing Date: August 30, 2021, 17:00 Belgrade time

Subject: Notice for Funding Opportunity (NOFO) RFA #72016921RFA00005

Activity Title: Civil Society Resilience Strengthening activity in Serbia

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 98.001

Ladies/Gentlemen:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in cooperation with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is seeking applications for a cooperative agreement from qualified entities to implement the Civil Society Resilience Strengthening activity. Eligibility for this award is not restricted.

USAID intends to make an award to the applicant who best meets the objectives of this funding opportunity based on the merit review criteria described in this RFA subject to a risk assessment. Eligible parties interested in submitting an application are encouraged to read this RFA thoroughly to understand the type of program sought, application submission requirements and selection process.

To be eligible for award, the applicant must provide all information as required in this RFA and meet eligibility standards in Section C of this RFA. This funding opportunity is posted on www.grants.gov, and may be amended. It is the responsibility of the applicant to regularly check the website to ensure they have the latest information pertaining to this notice of funding opportunity and to ensure that the RFA has been received from the internet in its entirety. USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion process. If you have difficulty registering on www.grants.gov or accessing the RFA, please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via email at support@grants.gov for technical assistance.

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements detailed in Section D.6.g. The registration process may take several weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin registration early in the process.

Please send any questions to the point(s) of contact identified in Section D. The deadline for questions is shown above. Responses to questions received prior to the deadline will be furnished to all potential applicants through an amendment to this notice posted to www.grants.gov.

Issuance of this notice of funding opportunity does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government nor does it commit the Government to pay for any costs incurred in preparation or submission of comments/suggestions or an application. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Thank you for your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

Boryana Boncheva
Agreement Officer

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SECTION A: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This funding opportunity is authorized under the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, as amended. The resulting award will be subject to 2 CFR 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, and USAID’s supplement, 2 CFR 700, as well as the additional requirements found in Section F.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION (PD)

Introduction

USAID/Serbia is seeking assistance to help strengthen Serbia’s civil society resiliency by provision of capacity building, technical support, advocacy, public awareness and cross sectoral cooperation through the Civil Society Resilience Strengthening activity (CSRS).

USAID estimates a life of activity budget of \$9 million over 5 years, depending on the availability of funds and the interventions proposed. Additional funding and time may be provided for program expansion, pending successful execution and existing opportunities.

Background

Serbia has a large and vibrant civil society (approximately 30,000 civil society organizations) which has played a crucial role in democracy development over the last two decades. Nonetheless a variety of indices highlight that civic space in Serbia is steadily deteriorating. This includes Freedom House’s Freedom in the World Report that now classifies Serbia as a partly free country due to the growing concentration of power around the ruling party, erosion of civic and political liberties and harassment of civil society organizations and independent journalists.¹ The CIVICUS and Human Rights Watch 2019 report highlights increased incidents of intimidation and harassment of human rights activists and journalists which consequently downgraded Serbia’s civic space rating from *narrow* to *obstructed*.² Overall civil society sustainability continued to decline in 2020, per USAID’s Civil Society Sustainability Index, with deterioration noted in the legal environment, advocacy, service provision, sectoral infrastructure, and public image dimensions.

Despite this, civil society in Serbia currently remains one of the main drivers of democratic resilience as democratic institutions and media freedom remain weak and pluralism continues to decline. This has made the sector a direct target of a number of non-democratic actors that have sought to exploit existing sectoral vulnerabilities, further tarnish the poor public image of the sector, and expand citizens' disenchantment with civic engagement overall. As such, the sector continues to face a number of internal (capacities/abilities) and external (shrinking space) challenges which threaten the sector's sustainability and ability to contribute to Serbia’s commitment to democracy, Euro-Atlantic integration and self-reliance.

Per various analyses, identifiable challenges facing Serbia’s civil society sector include:

- Shrinking civic space (public harassment/attacks, lack of government cooperation, centralization of info, influence of global and regional trends).

¹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/serbia/freedom-world/2020>

² <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/4113-serbia-s-civic-space-downgraded>

- Limited capacities and ability of civil society actors to respond to new closing space challenges and restrictions such as Anti-Money Laundering Legislation, disinformation, cybersecurity threats, etc.
- Fragile financial sustainability, especially for groups working on government accountability and human rights issues.
- Limited opportunity for sectoral dialogue and organized cooperation among formal and informal civil society groups.
- Disconnected from broader constituencies and poor public image.
- Limited development of new generations of civil society leaders.
- Declining presence of democratic, liberal, and pro human rights discourse in public narratives.
- A press environment largely controlled by the government, which greatly restricts the ability to freely share information on activities.
- Establishment of new civil society organizations (CSOs) with anti-democratic platforms that create confusion in an already weakened civil society sector.

In recent years, CSOs and activists working on human rights, anti-corruption, marginalized groups and environmental activism in Serbia have faced additional challenges related to state harassment, public slander and even violence, organizational capacity and financial sustainability.

Globally, there have also been worrisome trends that are negatively affecting civic space, some of which can be seen in Serbia as well. These include limitations to freedom of expression, association, and assembly in the digital space (internet shutdowns, cybercrime laws, online content and social media restrictions, artificial intelligence, disinformation), targeting of liberal artists, entertainers; state abuse of anti-money laundering and countering terrorism financing legislation; targeting environmental advocacy; and crackdown on protests. Many of these existing weaknesses have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic and various government response measures.

Despite these worrisome trends and challenges, there have been some positive developments, lessons learned and opportunities which may be harnessed to stimulate further resilience of civil society and democratic development in Serbia.

Following elections in June 2020 and government formation in October 2020, the Governmental Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, which served as an important liaison between the government and civil society, was merged with the newly formed Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue. It now is the special “civil society” unit within the Ministry. The new Ministry has defined as its priorities protection and improvement of human and minority rights, advancement of gender equality and anti-discrimination policies as well as improvement in the civil society enabling environment from the perspective of policies.

While many civil society actors are hesitant and cautious regarding the new Ministry, which has resulted in some of the most-renowned CSOs in Serbia disengaging from the Ministry-led process of the formulation of the new civil society enabling environment strategy, it nonetheless presents an avenue for resuming engagement once a more trusting relationship between civil

society and government is re-established. Creating and utilizing opportunities to demonstrate concrete action and genuine commitment to positive reform is essential to building relationships and trust between the civil and government sectors.

Serbia is in the midst of governmental-wide digital transformations of institutions. Serbian officials often refer to their activities as “digitalization.” In contrast to digitization -- the conversion of individual documents into an electronic format -- digitalization denotes a more profound shift in work processes and organizational culture. A thriving digital ecosystem requires interaction between the government, civil society, and private sector stakeholders around complex topics such as digital rights, cybersecurity, oversight and open data which may also present opportunities for constructive cooperation between the two sectors around the Open Government Partnership Initiative of which Serbia is a member.

Current USAID and other donor civil society programming has placed a strong emphasis on supporting new grassroots local initiatives that have a strong constituency and ability to mobilize nontraditional actors. This kind of programming has succeeded in mobilizing citizens around issues of public concern which is very important for fostering new generations of activists and improving civil society image among citizens. According to the 2020 Audit of Political Engagement, almost 30% of citizens have engaged in or initiated some form of community activism as compared to 11% in 2018.³

Cooperation between civil society and the private sector has also been improving with more partnerships being formed between the private sector and CSOs, more CSOs becoming recipients of corporate donations and online crowdfunding campaigns and constructive partnerships formed between the private and civil society sector on various advocacy initiatives. The new Civil Society Resilience Strengthening Activity (CSRS) will continue expanding these efforts in order to further advance sectoral financial sustainability.

From 2019 to 2021 USAID piloted resiliency building of 12 individual CSOs, through the global [INSPIRES program](#) and has provided support in responding to some emerging issues, including abuse of anti-money laundering legislation vis-a-vis civil society. This experience revealed a need for greater support to help civil society groups develop cohesive strategies to address specific challenges that all organizations in the sector are facing. This support will also help build on the foundation of local knowledge and expertise (acknowledging that there is diverse experience and expertise in the Serbian civil society sector) and augmenting it with global and regional experiences. The new Civil Society Resilience Strengthening Activity will build and expand these efforts to the entire sector, will foster horizontal and vertical sectoral resiliency, and will create opportunities for constructive discussions regarding the enabling environment.

Alignment with USAID’s Strategic Goal

USAID’s strategic goal over the next five years is to foster: *‘A more economically-productive and democratic Serbia pursuing Euro-Atlantic integration and self-reliance.’* USAID will help

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https://crta.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CRTA_Attributes-of-Serbian-citizens-about-participation-in-democratic-processes-2020-_audit.pdf

Serbia advance political and economic reforms, meet the challenge of external stresses, and sustainably advance to self-reliance.

The CSRS activity will contribute to USAID’s Development Objective focused on increasing the resiliency of democratic actors through building government responsiveness to citizen needs, building citizen capacity to demand change, and mitigating external stresses. USAID believes that if a broader range of democratic actors are engaged and able to act in the public interest and can resist external stressors, then Serbia’s commitment to self-reliance and Euro-Atlantic integration will improve.

Under the Serbia Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), Intermediate Result 1.2, activities will support the demand side of democratic reform by providing more effective channels for citizens to take an active role in society, so they are better informed and able to achieve their individual political, economic, and life goals. Through Sub IR 1.2.3 “Strengthening the Resilience of CS”, USAID intends to help CSOs, including youth and women’s organizations, to better aggregate and represent citizen interests and to engage in dialogue with the local or national authorities regarding those interests and the overall enabling environment for civil society. Such engagement is expected to increase the accountability of government institutions and align government programs to better meet the needs of the broader public.

USAID also believes that engagement with youth, businesses, women and gender minorities holds significant opportunities to advance CDCS objectives. USAID engagement with these populations throughout programming will help to mainstream these groups in society, assist them to meet their potential, gain influence in their government and society, and achieve greater prosperity.

The full Country Development Strategy can be found here:

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/External_Serbia_CDCS_2020.pdf

Program Objectives, Theory of Change and Anticipated Results

The new CSRS activity will help improve civil society organizations’ ability to respond to shrinking civic space and improve the enabling environment so that it may continue to foster informed citizen participation in democratic processes.

For the purpose of this activity USAID defines *resilience* as having the ability to anticipate and adapt swiftly and purposefully to quickly changing external conditions, in order to prepare and respond effectively.

Overall goal:

Civil society is more resilient to shrinking civic space challenges and able to better perform its watchdog, advocacy and citizen engagement roles as a result of an improved enabling environment.

Theory of Change:

If the ability of civil society to respond to new closing space challenges is improved through legal assistance, capacity building and mentoring provided to CSOs, and if the legal enabling environment is improved and public understanding of civil society's benefits increased, then the resiliency of civil society will be enhanced and it will be able to perform its watchdog, advocacy, and citizen engagement roles. Ultimately this leads towards a more resilient, inclusive and pluralistic society.

Through provision of technical assistance, capacity building, monitoring, cross-sectoral engagement and rapid response funding, the CSRS activity is expected to increase civil society actors' organizations' knowledge and capacity to respond to growing restrictions on civic space and to also improve the overall enabling environment in Serbia.

Given USAID's new CDCS, the following principles should guide programmatic choices:

- **Supporting locally-led development**

The activity should make best use of Serbia's existing local expertise and capacity and foster locally-led development and strengthening of local systems in order to ensure sustainability of efforts and local ownership. International expertise and knowledge should be utilized to augment and support Serbian civil society through genuine partnership and observation of the "do no harm" principle. Support for mobilization of domestic financial resources and private sector engagement should also be incorporated throughout proposed activities.

- **Flexible and Adaptive Approaches**

Given the rapidly changing environment in Serbia, the activity should take on a very flexible and adaptive approach seeking to identify opportunities as they arise, responding quickly to new developments, and testing out different approaches. Contingency and emergency response planning should also be included as part of programming.

- **Fostering Inclusive Development**

Due to a number of factors, including different donor strategies, over the past couple of years local CSOs and those working with marginalized groups have not been sufficiently supported. Dialogue around the civil society enabling environment has also traditionally been led by a number of larger, often Belgrade based organizations, which has limited opportunities for greater inputs and engagement by local and non-traditional CSOs, thus limiting the plurality of voices represented. Approaches to programming should make concentrated efforts to foster solidarity and inclusive development across both national and local level.

Proposed interventions are expected to promote inclusion to maximize developmental impact. Proposals are expected to integrate appropriate recommendations from USAID/Serbia's Gender Analysis (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WNPZ.pdf) in their technical approach and monitoring and evaluation plan. The Recipient will be expected to meet gender equity objectives in conjunction with other programmatic outcomes throughout the life of the activity, so that the

activity can be as inclusive and responsive to gender issues as possible. Interventions that directly or indirectly involve youth and their out-migration are strongly encouraged. In order to achieve the stated goal, the program will engage in two objectives described below. The following is a list of expected results and illustrative activities that could be considered – other innovative ideas of results and activities to achieve the stated objectives are welcome.

Objective 1: Improved ability of civil society organizations to respond to new and emerging civic space challenges

While Serbia has generally a well developed and active civil society, the sector's ability to remain resilient and respond jointly to emerging challenges has been spotty. Some challenges like new legislation and IT/cyber threats, require new knowledge and skills not widely understood or practiced by Serbia's CSOs. In addition, understanding and planning for legal defense as well as litigation strategies are new areas that should be explored. On the other hand, some chronic challenges that the sector has faced, such as financial sustainability, limited constituency base, poor public communication and lack of dialogue around sectoral integrity, have made the sector more vulnerable in an already challenging civic space. Lack of inter-sectoral dialogue around the overall enabling environment and sectoral integrity has also been a challenge that has created a divide between larger, often Belgrade based organizations, and smaller regional and local groups. The afore-mentioned challenges all contribute to a lack of resilience in the civil society sector in Serbia.

USAID is seeking activities that will look to address different aspects of sectoral resiliency through capacity building, mentorship, dialogue facilitation, organizational development and rapid response grants and other innovative approaches. Activities must be flexible, adaptive and able to quickly respond to identified needs and opportunities.

Anticipated Results

Each result includes a subsection of illustrative activities. Please note that these are USAID's initial ideas of what kinds of activities could lead to the anticipated result and are a guide only; applicants are encouraged to propose creative ideas and approaches to achieve the following results:

RESULT 1: CSOs are more skilled and able to respond to shrinking space challenges

Illustrative activities may include: resiliency skills building: digital skills, cyber security and internet freedom, PR & communications (including crisis response); building in-country legal expertise (including litigation strategy planning); strengthening cooperation with international human rights and legal experts and bodies; support for collective sectoral dialogue and action; network formation and facilitation; emergency response funding; and legal aid and support; etc.

RESULT 2: Financial sustainability of CSOs improved

Illustrative activities may include: transformation of fundraising efforts from one-off to institutional; continued private sector engagement efforts; support for advocacy, policy dialogue and development of online crowdfunding regulation; fundraising capacity building for advocacy

organizations (advantage to be given to groups working on women's rights, youth, marginalized groups); and improved financial management.

RESULT 3: Constituency base of CS expanded to include more non-traditional actors

Illustrative activities may include: increasing number of citizens supporting CSO activism, engaging private sector and academia actors, greater engagement of youth, older generations, rural and minority populations; unions and other non-traditional stakeholders, gathering info about constituencies & outreach to them; creating linkages between CSOs and "non-traditional audiences"; increasing the number of CSO supporters, volunteers, and followers.

RESULT 4: Sectoral integrity and cooperation enhanced

Illustrative activities may include: Fostering intra-sectoral dialogue on advancing civil society transparency and solidarity; developing and piloting self-regulation approaches; supporting sectoral transparency initiatives; developing strategies and support to deal with dis-information and non-democratic actors targeting genuine civil society.

Objective 2: Improved Enabling Environment for Civil Society

According to USAID's Civil Society Sustainability Index, the score for the legal enabling environment for civil society has been declining for four years in a row. While this has primarily been due to factors related to "harassment" and limited engagement of civil society organizations in policy development, there has also been a lack of structured dialogue and systemic action around different factors and policies affecting civil society. Discussions about local policies affecting civil society have also been lacking, with some local organizations experiencing challenges in organizing public events and other aspects of their work. At the same time, Serbia generally has a favorable legislative framework for civil society organizations, which should be preserved and expanded to include best practices from the EU and others at both the national and local level.

Cooperation between civil society and government institutions such as the parliament, independent institutions, and the newly-formed Ministry for Human Rights and Social dialogue has been strained with a number of civil society organizations choosing to disengage from certain policy development processes, such as the development of the government's strategy for improving the civil society enabling environment, for a number of reasons including: continued public slandering by government officials; not taking into account provided civil society inputs and generally pro forma; and non-transparency. In addition, access to information of public importance on which many oversight groups rely on for their work has become more difficult to obtain. This has resulted in broken trust as well as a stalemate in terms of a systemic approach to improving the operating environment for civil society. Government-wide dialogue and outreach that proactively engages decision makers from the executive, legislative, judicial and oversight bodies, and piloting of different mechanisms and approaches (whether formal or informal) are necessary for moving towards meaningful systemic improvements in the enabling environment for civil society.

Public image of civil society is yet another dimension of the enabling environment that has been declining for a number of years. While this is in great part related to the overall media and civic

space environment in Serbia, civil society has also struggled to develop wide-reaching public messaging campaigns and their activities have been limited to smaller groups of citizens. As a result, citizens lack solidarity with CSOs and remain unaware of the important and constructive work civil society does. Cooperation with local media outlets has been improving but mainstream media continue to provide scant reporting of news coming from civil society. As such, civil society has generally focused on online and social media outreach, which although it is growing in importance, it still doesn't have as wide of a reach as television and print especially towards audiences traditionally less receptive to civil society.

USAID is seeking activities that will identify, create and facilitate opportunities for constructive dialogue and concrete engagement on advancing the enabling environment for civil society at both the national and local levels through a number of different strategic, flexible and adaptive approaches. USAID is also seeking activities that will address issues related to improving civil society's public image.

Anticipated Results

Each result includes a subsection of illustrative activities. Please note that these are USAID's initial ideas of what kinds of activities could lead to the anticipated result and are a guide only; applicants are again encouraged to propose creative ideas and approaches to achieve the following results.

RESULT 1: Increased dialogue and meaningful cooperation between civil society and the government in policy making and implementation

Illustrative activities may include: meaningful and constructive civil society participation in legislative working groups and oversight processes; improved civil society access to information of public importance; multi stakeholder meetings (public, private, civil society) on issues of common interest at the national and local levels; support for annual sectoral dialogue events; support for greater solidarity among different civil society sectors in policy development; creating space and opportunity for a dialogue regarding local issues of national importance (ie.environmental issues, social inclusion, etc.).

RESULT 2: Legal Enabling Environment enhanced

Illustrative activities may include: Preserving positive existing frameworks for CS through advocacy and policy dialogue at the national and local levels; advancing policies where there is opportunity (i.e., anti-discrimination, crowdfunding, taxation) through technical assistance, advocacy; and exploring new mechanisms for greater engagement of civil society in policy making and oversight.

RESULT 3: Civil society public image improved

Illustrative activities may include: improving relations between civil society and mainstream media; support for initiatives/campaigns of significant public importance intended to mobilize citizen support and demonstrate solidarity; support for public volunteerism, building new partnerships and networks between media and civil society; pilot grants for civil society media development, promoting civil society success stories; facilitating coordination among donors on seeking media coverage; and promoting CS activities on donor social media platforms.

Activity Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Plan (AMELP) guidelines

The application shall contain an illustrative AMELP responding to objectives and expected results as set forth in this Program Description. The proposed AMELP should clearly demonstrate how it will experiment with interventions, assess impact, adapt to programmatic and contextual changes, and seek to scale up successful practices. Applicants will propose indicators which will assist in managing project performance. The AMELP should contain objectives and results, outcome and performance/output indicators, data sources and collection methods, baseline information or a timeline for collecting it, annual targets (disaggregated by gender and focusing on youth), and references to staff responsible for data collection and analysis. A log frame with overall goal, objectives, outcomes and illustrative indicators should be included in the AMELP. The proposed AMELP should include gender and youth indicators where appropriate. Applicants should consult USAID ADS 205 to learn more about relevant gender indicators and integrating gender equality in programming. The applicant shall also include information as to how it proposes to tackle learning and program adaptation.

Coordination with other USAID programs and other donors

Close coordination and regular consultation with USAID is expected. This activity will coordinate closely with USAID activities on civil society, media, and government accountability, as well as economic growth in order to be used as possible ways to educate parties on issues of citizen concern and areas to champion for reforms. Activities include, but are not limited to, the USAID Government Accountability Initiative, USAID MIPS Activity, LEAD, Civic Action for Accountability, Strategic Advocacy Approaches and USAID Innovation Activities. Coordination with USAID global programs such as the USAID Greater Internet Freedom (GIF) Activity as well as the USAID [Enabling and Protecting Civic Space \(EPCS\) INSPIRES](#) project is also expected. Coordination with donors such as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (particularly with the Program For An Active Civil Society Together - ACT), EU Delegation and any other donor programs engaged in similar areas is strongly encouraged as well.

Gender, Youth and Minority Considerations

Gender dynamics are important for ensuring democratic and inclusive societies. In Serbia women, youth, persons with disabilities and LGBTQI+ persons continue to face discrimination, harassment, and violence, which prevents them from fulfilling their potentials as active members of society. The demand side of democratic reform involves empowering all citizens equally and building their knowledge on how to take an active role in society, so they are better informed and able to achieve their individual political, economic, and life goals. Through this activity, USAID will support both furthering gender considerations as an outcome and incorporating gender dynamics and considerations across all activities. Additionally, the activity will promote the participation of persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ communities, women, youth, and other marginalized groups. The applicant shall note how proposed activities will work towards this and how impact will be evaluated and assessed.

[END OF SECTION A]

SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated

USAID intends to award one Cooperative Agreement pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity. Subject to funding availability and at the discretion of the Agency, USAID contribution to the activity is \$6,000,000 and anticipated additional contribution of \$3,000,000 from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), at the total estimated amount of \$9,000,000, over the 5-year period of performance.

USAID reserves the right to fund any one or none of the applications submitted, or to fund parts of applications. Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of USAID, nor does it commit USAID to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of any application.

2. Expected Performance Indicators, Targets, Baseline Data, and Data Collection

For more information on the AMELP requirements, please see Sections A and F of this RFA.

3. Start Date and Period of Performance for Federal Awards

The anticipated period of performance is 5 years. The estimated start date is mid-November 2021.

4. Substantial Involvement

It is anticipated to have substantial involvement in this activity and specific elements of substantial involvement will be tailored in accordance with ADS 303.3.11 and final program description.

Cooperative agreements are identical to grants except that USAID will be substantially involved. USAID will make a determination on the intended substantial involvement by the Agency upon award. The specific areas of USAID substantial involvement will include, but not be limited to

- USAID approval of the recipient's annual implementation plans
- USAID approval of specified key personnel (limited to five (5) positions or five percent (5%) of the recipient employees working under the award, whichever is greater).
- USAID and recipient collaboration or joint participation, which includes one or more of the following:
 - USAID concurrence on the substantive provisions of sub-awards;
 - USAID approval of the recipient's AMELP (to the extent that such information is not included in the application); and
 - USAID monitoring to authorize specified kinds of direction or redirection because of interrelationships with other projects.
- USAID authority to immediately halt a construction activity.

5. Authorized Geographic Code

The geographic code for the procurement of commodities and services under this program is 937, as described in [ADS Chapter 310](#).

In anticipation of final implementation guidance issued by USAID, the Applicant is notified of recent changes to cost allowability regulations - specifically 2 CFR 200.216, finalized on August 13, 2020 - concerning the procurement of prohibited technology goods and services under assistance awards.

6. Nature of the Relationship between USAID and the Recipient

The principal purpose of the relationship with the Recipient and under the subject program is to transfer funds to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation of the Small and Medium Enterprise activity which is authorized by Federal statute. The successful Recipient will be responsible for ensuring the achievement of the program objectives and the efficient and effective administration of the award through the application of sound management practices. The Recipient will assume responsibility for administering Federal funds in a manner consistent with underlying agreements, program objectives, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award.

7. Title to Property

Property title under the resultant agreement shall vest with the recipient in accordance with the requirements of Mandatory Standard Provision for Non-US Organizations, [Title To And Use Of Property \(December 2014\)](#).

8. Special Award Requirement Relating to the Prohibition on Certain Telecommunication and Video Surveillance Services or Equipment (November 2020)

USAID has been granted a temporary waiver under Section 889(d)(2) that will allow the recipient to use award funds through September 30, 2022, to procure certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment as specified in the standard provision "Prohibition on Certain Telecommunication and Video Surveillance Services or Equipment (NOVEMBER 2020)." Based on this waiver, all costs incurred for covered telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment will be allowable through September 30, 2022, without regard to the cost principle at 2 CFR 200.471. Procurements made on or after October 1, 2022, will be unallowable in accordance with 2 CFR 200.471

[END OF SECTION B]

SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

Through this RFA, USAID seeks to make awards to organizations and/or partnerships that can make concrete and meaningful contributions to sustainably strengthen Serbia's civil society resiliency by provision of capacity building, technical support, advocacy, public awareness and cross sectoral cooperation.

Eligibility for this RFA is not restricted. All U.S. and non-U.S. public, private, for-profit, and nonprofit organizations, as well as institutions of higher education, parochial, and other non-governmental organizations, are eligible to submit an application. Further, the organization must be a legally recognized organizational entity under applicable law. Foreign government-owned parastatal organizations from countries that are ineligible for assistance under the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) or related appropriations acts are ineligible. Applications from individuals will not be accepted nor reviewed.

While for-profit firms may participate, pursuant to 2 CFR 200.400(g), it is USAID policy not to award profit to prime recipients and subrecipients under assistance instruments. However, the prohibition does not apply when the recipient acquires goods and services in accordance with 2 CFR 200.317 -326, "Procurement Standards." This is discussed more specifically in ADS 303sai "Profit Under USAID Assistance Instruments," which can be found at this link: <http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303sai.pdf>.

Each applicant must be found to be a responsible entity before receiving an award. The Agreement Officer (AO) may determine that a pre-award survey is required in accordance with ADS 303.3.9.1 and if so, would establish a formal survey team to conduct an examination that will determine whether the applicant has the necessary organization, experience, accounting and operational controls, and technical skills – or ability to obtain them – in order to achieve the objectives of the program. Applicants who do not currently meet all USAID requirements for systems and controls may still be eligible under special award considerations and should not be discouraged from applying. USAID welcomes applications from organizations that have not previously worked with the Agency.

USAID strongly encourages applications from potential new partners who meet the above eligibility requirements and are willing to be subjected to a Pre-Award Responsibility Determination, which is a pre-award audit to determine fiscal responsibility (i.e., whether the prospective recipient has the necessary organization, experience, accounting and operational controls, and technical skills – or ability to obtain them – in order to achieve the objective of this program and comply with the terms and conditions of the award).

Each applicant organization is limited to one application submission as the Prime applicant. There is no limitation on being included as a potential Sub-awardee. USAID discourages the use of exclusive teaming arrangements.

Submissions from organizations that do not meet the above eligibility criteria will not be reviewed and evaluated.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing is not required.

3. Unique Entity Identifier and System Award Management (SAM)

Dun and Bradstreet and SAM.gov Requirements can be found under [this link](#). USAID will not award the applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable SAM requirements and has obtained a unique entity identifier. Each applicant is required to:

- (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its full application.
- (ii) Provide a valid unique entity identifier in its full application; and
- (iii) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

[END OF SECTION C]

SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Agency Point of Contact

Name: Dukagjin Hasani
Title: A&A Specialist
Email: dhasani@usaid.gov

Name: Branislav Bulatovic
Title: A&A Specialist
Email: bbulatovic@usaid.gov

2. Questions and Answers

Questions regarding this RFA should be submitted by e-mail no later than the date and time indicated on the cover letter. Any information given to a prospective applicant concerning this RFA will be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as an amendment to this RFA, if that information is necessary in submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicant.

3. General Content and Form of Application

Preparation of Applications:

Each applicant must furnish the information required by this RFA. Applications must be submitted in two separate parts, Technical Application and the Business (Cost) Application. This subsection addresses general content requirements applying to the entire application. Please see subsections 5 and 6, below, for information on the content specific to the Technical and Cost applications. The Technical application must address technical aspects only while the Cost Application must present the costs, and address risk and other related issues.

Both the Technical and Cost Applications must include a cover page containing the following information:

- Name of the organization(s) submitting the application.
- Identification and signature of the primary contact person (by name, title, organization, mailing address, telephone number and email address) and the identification of the alternate contact person (by name, title, organization, mailing address, telephone number and email address). Applications signed by an agent on behalf of the applicant must be accompanied by evidence of that agent's authority, unless that evidence has been previously furnished to the issuing office.
- Program name
- Notice of Funding Opportunity number
- Name of any proposed sub-recipients or partnerships (identify if any of the organizations are local organizations, per USAID's definition of 'local entity' under ADS 303).

Applications must comply with the following:

- Use standard 8 ½" x 11", single sided, single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1" margins, left justification, and headers and/or footers on each page including consecutive page numbers, date of submission, and applicant's name.
- Written in English.
- Graphics and charts may use a 10-pt font, however, tables must comply with the 12-point Times New Roman requirement. Graphs and charts should be for illustrative purposes only and should not comprise the majority of the application text.
- Submitted via searchable and editable Microsoft Word or PDF formats, except budget files which must be submitted in Microsoft Excel.
- Must be compliant with the page limitations. USAID will not review any pages in excess of the page limits noted in the subsequent sections.
- The estimated start date identified in Section B of this RFA must be used in the cost application.
- The Cost Schedule must include the Budget Template Excel spreadsheet (Attachment 1 to this RFA) with all cells unlocked and no hidden formulas or sheets. A PDF version of the Excel spreadsheet may be submitted in addition to the Excel version at the applicant's discretion, however, the official cost application submission is the unlocked Excel version.

Applicants must review, understand, and comply with all aspects of this RFA. Failure to do so may be considered as being non-responsive and may be evaluated accordingly. Applicants should retain a copy of the application and all enclosures for their records.

4. Application Submission Procedures

Applications in response to this RFA must be submitted no later than the closing date and time indicated on the cover letter, as amended. Late applications will not be reviewed nor considered at the discretion of the Agreement Officer. Applicants must retain proof of timely delivery in the form of system generated documentation of delivery receipt date and time/confirmation from the receiving office/certified mail receipt.

Sample Language for email submission:

Applications must be submitted by email to both individuals indicated in section D.1. Email submissions must include the RFA number and applicant's name in the subject line heading. In addition, for an application sent by multiple emails, the subject line must also indicate whether the email relates to the technical or cost application, and the desired sequence of the emails and their attachments (e.g. "No. 1 of 4", etc.). For example, if your cost application is being sent in two emails, the first email should have a subject line that states: "[RFA number], [organization name], Cost Application, Part 1 of 2".

USAID's preference is that the technical application and the cost application each be submitted as consolidated email attachments, e.g. that you consolidate the various parts of a technical application into a single document before sending it. If this is not possible, please provide

instructions on how to collate the attachments. USAID will not be responsible for errors in compiling electronic applications if no instructions are provided or are unclear.

After submitting an application electronically, applicants should immediately check their own email to confirm that the attachments were indeed sent. If an applicant discovers an error in transmission, please send the material again and note in the subject line of the email or indicate in the file name if submitted via grants.gov that it is a "corrected" submission. Do not send the same email more than once unless there has been a change, and if so, please note that it is a "corrected" email.

Applicants are reminded that email is NOT instantaneous, and in some cases delays of several hours occur from transmission to receipt. Therefore, applicants are requested to send the application in sufficient time ahead of the deadline. For this RFA, the initial point of entry to the government infrastructure is the USAID mail server.

There may be a problem with the receipt of *.zip files due to anti-virus software. Therefore, applicants are discouraged from sending files in this format as USAID cannot guarantee their acceptance by the internet server. File size must not exceed 5 MB.

5. Technical Application Format

The technical application is limited to **25 pages, excluding annexes if any**. The technical application should be specific, complete, and presented concisely. The application must demonstrate the applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this program. The application should take into account the requirements of the program and merit review criteria found in this RFA, and should include the following:

(a) Cover Page (not included in the page limit), see Section D.3 above for requirements

(b) Table of Contents (not included in the page limit)

Include major sections and page numbering to easily cross-reference and identify merit review criteria.

(c) Executive Summary (not more than two pages), included in the page limit.

The Executive Summary must provide a high-level overview of key elements of the Technical Application.

(d) Technical Approach (included in the page limit)

The Technical Approach should demonstrate technical soundness, clarity, innovation and flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances, attention to cross-cutting objectives, as well as sustainability of the program results. The Technical Approach should also include details on how proposed interventions will be implemented, specify which stakeholders will be engaged in the process, discuss opportunities/barriers that could speed/hinder progress, and suggest solutions to

address the barriers. Merely repeating the narrative in the Program Description without sufficient elaboration will not be considered responsive.

In the Technical Approach, the applicants should provide the following information:

- Outlined program activities that respond to identified needs and opportunities of the civil society sector in Serbia.
- The local context, key stakeholders (drivers and barriers to change), root causes, issues, and priorities faced by civil society in Serbia. Also, identify the risks and the means for addressing them; existing opportunities for engagement; innovative tools and lessons learned from similar programs implemented elsewhere.
- Commitment to empowerment of local actors and proposed plan for addressing issues related to gender, youth and minority group inclusion and empowerment during activity implementation.
- Public Awareness Approach: General approach to communication of the activity as well as any specific approach, including mainstream and social media, they plan to utilize to ensure stories receive coverage given Serbia's restrictive media environment.
- **Draft AMELP (as an Annex to the Technical Application, not to exceed 2 pages):** Illustrative AMELP for identification of expected intermediate and final results of the activity, monitoring of the activity to include suggested indicators of activity impact and success, targets, data sources and collection methods, baseline information and follow-on data, benchmarks, and strategy for the phase-out and sustainability of activities.
- **Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan (as an Annex to the Technical Application, not to exceed 1 pages):** The applicant shall note the main contextual, programmatic and institutional risks that the proposed approach and activities will face as well as possible mitigation measures to address them. The applicant should note the probability of risk incidence, potential impact and planned measures for limiting or responding to particular risks (mitigation). Not to exceed more than 1 page.

(e) Organizational Capability, Management Approach, Staffing and Key Personnel (included in the page limit)

This section shall include the following components:

1) Organizational Experience and Capability

The applicant should describe its organizational knowledge and capability to effectively implement the proposed approach, including:

- Organizational experience in developing and managing complex civil society focused programs of a similar size and complexity, particularly in transitional countries,

- Prior experience in working with international donors, preferably in Eastern Europe and how this expertise will help in achieving the program objectives.
- Capacity to support multiple and complex field operations.
- Experience in coordinating with other donors and key stakeholders in achieving objectives, including governments, civil society organizations, associations, private sector, and educational institutions.
- Experience utilizing, employing, and building local and regional talent in promoting sustainability.

In addition, the applicant should describe a maximum of five relevant contracts, grants, and/or cooperative agreements that the organization has implemented involving similar or related programs over the past five years. The applicant should include the following past performance information as an **Annex to the Technical Application, not to exceed 5 pages**.

- Name, address, current telephone number, and email address of responsible representative(s) from the organization for which the work was performed.
- Contract/grant name, number, place of performance, annual amounts received, and beginning and end dates; and
- Brief description of the project/assistance activity.

2) **Management Approach**

- A management plan narrative that illustrates the management structure and staff for the prime and all subrecipients. The narrative must describe the roles, responsibilities, and clear lines of authority of staff, partners, and subrecipients, with an emphasis on engaging local resources where possible.
- A clear approach to managing technical and financial reporting of multiple funding sources, harmonizing program logistics, personnel, travel, and procurement systems, while taking advantage of organizational strengths, emphasizing cost-effectiveness, and avoiding duplication of effort. The applicant must also describe concrete steps for close communication, coordination, collaboration, and knowledge sharing between USAID project partners, other donors and any other relevant actors.
- An organizational chart that illustrates the management structure of both full-time and non-full time staff for prime and all subrecipients. The organization chart should not exceed one page, **be attached as an Annex, and will not be included in the overall page limitation**.

3) **Staffing Plan**

Applicants must propose a staffing plan that includes a narrative section in the main body of the Application and a matrix as part of the Annexes. The narrative must describe how the skill set of the proposed non-key personnel positions (managerial, technical, and operational) complement that of the proposed Key Personnel and how the skill sets of the entire team contribute to the overall success of the program. The staffing matrix must depict the managerial, technical, and operational skill sets needed to implement the Award. For each individual already identified and for TBD positions, the matrix must indicate whether the personnel are proposed as full time or

non-full time (and if non-full time, what percent (%) LOE). The staffing matrix should not be more than one page, attached as an Annex, and will not be counted in the overall page limitation;

4) **Key Personnel**

Applicants may propose up to five (5) key personnel roles in accordance with the proposed approach and staffing plan. For each proposed key personnel position, the applicant should identify the position title and provide position descriptions, including roles and responsibilities and minimum qualifications (experience, education, skills, etc.), as **Annex to the technical application not to exceed 5 pages**.

The skill set for the proposed key personnel including other technical staffing mix, collectively should include at a minimum the following:

- Demonstrated experience in legal, strategic and regulatory framework for the civil society sector.
- Demonstrated experience in building and effectively supervising a diverse team of employees.
- Demonstrated experience with adaptive management approaches.
- Demonstrated experience with the approaches to local capacity development.
- Demonstrated effective interpersonal skills, creative problem-solving and ethical management skills.

6. **Business (Cost) Application Format**

The Cost Application must be submitted separately from the Technical Application. While no page limit exists for the full cost application, applicants are encouraged to be as concise as possible while still providing the necessary details. The cost application must illustrate the entire period of performance, using the budget format shown in the SF-424A.

Prior to award, applicants may be required to submit additional documentation deemed necessary for the Agreement Officer to assess the applicant's risk in accordance with 2 CFR 200.206. Applicants should not submit any additional information with their initial application.

The Cost Application must contain the following sections:

a) Cover Page (See Section D.3 above for requirements)

b) SF 424 Form(s)

The applicant must sign and submit the cost application using the SF-424 series. Standard Forms can be accessed electronically using the following links:

Instructions for SF-424	http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424-instructions.html
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Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html
Instructions for SF-424A	http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424a-instructions.html
Budget Information (SF-424A)	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html
Instructions for SF-424B	http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424b-instructions.html
Assurances (SF-424B)	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html

Failure to accurately complete these forms could result in the rejection of the application.

c) Required Certifications and Assurances

The applicant must complete the following documents and submit a signed copy :

- (1) “Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements of the Recipient” ADS 303mav document found at <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mav.pdf>
- (2) Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)
- (3) Certificate of Compliance: Please submit a copy of your Certificate of Compliance if your organization's systems have been certified by USAID/Washington's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA).

d) Budget and Budget Narrative

The applicants must provide a complete budget by cost element, including the budgets for each sub-awardee if any, by utilizing the provided budget template in Attachment 1 to this RFA. The Budget must be submitted as one unprotected Excel file (MS Office 2000 or later versions) with visible formulas and references and must be broken out by project year. Files must not contain any hidden or otherwise inaccessible cells. Budgets with hidden cells lengthen the cost analysis time required to make an award and may result in a rejection of the cost application. The Budget Narrative must contain sufficient detail to allow USAID to understand the proposed costs. The applicant must ensure the budgeted costs address any additional requirements identified in Section F, such as Branding and Marking. The Budget Narrative must be thorough, including sources for costs to support USAID’s determination that the proposed costs are fair and reasonable.

The Budget must include the following worksheets or tabs, and contents, at a minimum:

- Summary Budget, inclusive of all program costs (federal and non-federal), broken out by major budget category and by year for activities implemented by the applicant and any potential sub-applicants for the entire period of the program. See Section H, Annex 1 for Summary Budget Template

- Detailed Budget, including a breakdown by year, sufficient to allow the Agency to determine that the costs represent a realistic and efficient use of funding to implement the applicant's program and are allowable in accordance with the cost principles found in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E.
- Detailed Budgets for each sub-recipient, for all federal funding and cost share, broken out by budget category and by year, for the entire implementation period of the project.

The Detailed Budget must contain the following budget categories and information, at a minimum:

- 1) Salaries and Allowances – Must be proposed consistent with 2 CFR 200.430 Compensation - Personal Services. The applicant's budget must include position title, salary rate, level of effort, and salary escalation factors for each position. Allowances, when proposed, must be broken down by specific type and by position. Applicants must explain all assumptions in the Budget Narrative. The Budget Narrative must demonstrate that the proposed compensation is reasonable for the services rendered and consistent with what is paid for similar work in other activities of the applicant. Applicants must provide their established written policies on personnel compensation. If the applicant's written policies do not address a specific element of compensation that is being proposed, the Budget Narrative must describe the rationale for all costs and the supporting market research.
- 2) Fringe Benefits – (if applicable) If the applicant has a fringe benefit rate approved by an agency of the U.S. Government, the applicant must use such rate and provide evidence of its approval. If an applicant does not have a fringe benefit rate approved, the applicant must propose a rate and explain how the applicant determined the rate. In this case, the Budget Narrative must include a detailed breakdown of all items of fringe benefits (e.g., superannuation, gratuity, etc.) and the costs of each, expressed in U.S. dollars and as a percentage of salaries.
- 3) Travel and Transportation – Provide details to explain the purpose of the trips, the number of trips, the origin and destination, the number of individuals traveling, and the duration of the trips. Per Diem and associated travel costs must be based on the applicant's normal travel policies. When appropriate, please provide supporting documentation as an attachment, such as company travel policy, and explain assumptions in the Budget Narrative.
- 4) Procurement or Rental of Goods (Equipment & Supplies), Services, and Real Property – Must include information on estimated types of equipment, models, supplies and the cost per unit and quantity. The Budget Narrative must include the purpose of the equipment and supplies and the basis for the estimates. The Budget Narrative must support the necessity of any rental costs and reasonableness in light of such factors as: rental costs of comparable property, if any; market conditions in the area; alternatives available; and the type, life expectancy, condition, and value of the property leased.
- 5) Subawards – If applicable, specify the budget for the portion of the program to be passed through to any subrecipients. See 2 CFR 200 for assistance in determining whether the sub-tier entity is a subrecipient or contractor. The subrecipient budgets must align with the

same requirements as the applicant's budget, including those related to fringe and indirect costs.

- 6) Other Direct Costs – This may include other costs not elsewhere specified, such as report preparation costs, passports and visas fees, medical exams and inoculations, as well as any other miscellaneous costs which directly benefit the program proposed by the applicant. The applicant should indicate the subject, venue and duration of any proposed conferences and seminars, and their relationship to the objectives of the program, along with estimates of costs. Otherwise, the narrative should be minimal.
- 8) Indirect Costs – Applicants must indicate whether they are proposing indirect costs or will charge all costs directly. In order to better understand indirect costs please see Subpart E of 2 CFR 200. The application must identify which approach they are requesting and provide the applicable supporting information. Below are the most commonly used Indirect Cost Rate methods:

Method 1 - Direct Charge Only

Eligibility: Any applicant

Initial Application Requirements: See above on direct costs

Method 2 - Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)

Eligibility: Any applicant with a NICRA issued by a USG Agency must use that NICRA

Initial Application Requirements: If the applicant has a current NICRA, submit your approved NICRA and the associated disclosed practices. If your NICRA was issued by an Agency other than USAID, provide the contact information for the approving Agency. Additionally, at the Agency's discretion, a provisional rate may be set forth in the award subject to audit and finalization. See [USAID's Indirect Cost Rate Guide for Non Profit Organizations](#) for further guidance.

Method 3 - De minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC)

Eligibility: Any applicant that does not have a current NICRA

Initial Application Requirements: Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate an indirect rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time. The applicant must describe which cost elements it charges indirectly vs. directly. See 2 CFR 200 for further information.

Method 4 - Indirect Costs Charged as A Fixed Amount

Eligibility: Non-U.S. non-profit organizations without a NICRA may request, but approval is at the discretion of the AO.

Initial Application Requirements: Provide the proposed fixed amount and a worksheet that includes the following:

- Total costs incurred by the organization for the previous fiscal year and estimates for the current year.
- Indirect costs (common costs that benefit the day-to-day operations of the organization, including categories such as salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting, or that benefit and are identifiable to more than one program or activity, such as depreciation, rental costs, operations and maintenance of facilities, and telephone expenses) for the previous fiscal year and estimates for the current year
- Proposed method for prorating the indirect costs equitably and consistently across all programs and activities using a base that measures the benefits of that particular cost to each program or activity to which the cost applies.

If the applicant does not have an approved NICRA and does not elect to utilize the 10% de minimis rate, the Agreement Officer will provide further instructions and may request additional supporting information, including financial statements and audits, should the application still be under consideration after the merit review. USAID is under no obligation to approve the applicant's requested method.

e) Prior Approvals in accordance with 2 CFR 200.407

Inclusion of an item of cost in the detailed application budget does not satisfy any requirements for prior approval by the Agency. If the applicant would like the award to reflect approval of any cost elements for which prior written approval is specifically required for allowability, the applicant must specify and justify that cost. See 2 CFR 200.407 for information regarding which cost elements require prior written approval.

f) Approval of Subawards

The applicant must submit information for all subawards that it wishes to have approved at the time of award. For each proposed subaward the applicant must provide the following:

- Name of organization
- DUNS Number
- Confirmation that the subrecipient does not appear on the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) list
- Confirmation that the subrecipient does not have active exclusions in the System for Award Management (SAM)
- Confirmation that the subrecipient is not listed in the United Nations Security designation list
- Confirmation that the subrecipient is not suspended or debarred
- Confirmation that the applicant has completed a risk assessment of the subrecipient, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.332(b)
- Any negative findings as a result of the risk assessment and the applicant's plan for mitigation.

g) Duns and Bradstreet and SAM Requirements

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable SAM requirements and has obtained the unique entity identifier (DUNS number). Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is exempted from requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to:

1. Provide a valid DUNS number for the applicant and all proposed sub-recipients.
2. Be registered in SAM before submitting its application. SAM is streamlining processes, eliminating the need to enter the same data multiple times, and consolidating hosting to make the process of doing business with the government more efficient (www.beta.sam.gov).
3. Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

The registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin the process early. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements above by the time USAID is ready to make an award, USAID may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

DUNS number: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>

SAM registration: <http://www.beta.sam.gov>

Non-U.S. applicants can find additional resources for registering in SAM, including a Quick Start Guide and a video on how to obtain an NCAGE code, on www.beta.sam.gov, navigate to Help, then to International Registrants.

h) Branding Strategy & Marking Plan

The apparently successful applicant will be asked to provide a Branding Strategy and Marking Plan to be evaluated and approved by the Agreement Officer and incorporated into any resulting award

i) Funding Restrictions

Profit is not allowable for recipients or subrecipients under this award. See 2 CFR 200.331 for assistance in determining whether a sub-tier entity is a subrecipient or contractor.

Construction will not be authorized under this award.

USAID will not allow the reimbursement of pre-award costs under this award without the explicit written approval of the Agreement Officer.

Except as may be specifically approved in advance by the AO, all commodities and services that will be reimbursed by USAID under this award must be from the authorized geographic code specified in Section B.4 of this RFA and must meet the source and nationality requirements set forth in 22 CFR 228.

j) Conflict of Interest Pre-Award Term

Personal Conflict of Interest

1. An actual or appearance of a conflict of interest exists when an applicant organization or an employee of the organization has a relationship with an Agency official involved in the competitive award decision-making process that could affect that Agency official's impartiality. The term "conflict of interest" includes situations in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, the obligations and duties of a USAID employee or recipient employee.
2. The applicant must provide conflict of interest disclosures when it submits an SF-424. Should the applicant discover a previously undisclosed conflict of interest after submitting the application, the applicant must disclose the conflict of interest to the AO no later than ten (10) calendar days following discovery.

Organizational Conflict of Interest

The applicant must notify USAID of any actual or potential conflict of interest that they are aware of that may provide the applicant with an unfair competitive advantage in competing for this financial assistance award. Examples of an unfair competitive advantage include but are not limited to situations in which an applicant or the applicant's employee gained access to non-public information regarding a federal assistance funding opportunity, or an applicant or applicant's employee was substantially involved in the preparation of a federal assistance funding opportunity. USAID will promptly take appropriate action upon receiving any such notification from the applicant.

k) Potential Request for Additional Documentation

Upon consideration of award or during the negotiations leading to an award, applicants may be required to submit additional documentation deemed necessary for the AO to make an affirmative determination of responsibility (such as, bylaws, constitution, articles of incorporation, travel, procurement, financial management, accounting manual, and personnel policies and procedures, especially regarding salary, promotion, leave, differentials, etc.) Applicants should not submit this information with their applications. The information in this paragraph is provided so that applicants may become familiar with additional documentation that may be requested by the AO.

[END OF SECTION D]

SECTION E: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Merit Review Criteria

The merit review criteria prescribed here are tailored to the requirements of this particular RFA. Applicants should note that these criteria serve to: (a) identify the significant matters which the applicants should address in their applications, and (b) set the standard against which all applications will be evaluated.

Technical and other factors will be evaluated relative to each other, as described here and prescribed by the Technical Application Format. The Technical Application will be rated by a Selection Committee (SC) using the criteria described in this section.

Review and Selection Process

The Agreement Officer (AO) makes the final selection of the Selection Committee (SC) member. SC members will be USAID personnel (DHs and PSCs), also, representatives from the American Embassy, host government, or private sector individuals may be included as well.

a) Technical Merit Review

USAID will conduct a merit review of all applications received that comply with the instructions in this RFA. Applications will be reviewed and evaluated in accordance with the following criteria shown in descending order of importance.

1. Technical Approach

The extent to which the applicant demonstrates technical soundness, clarity, innovation and flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances, attention to cross-cutting objectives, sustainability of the program results, as laid out in Section A and Section D.5(d) of this RFA.

2. Organizational Capability, Management Approach, Staffing and Key Personnel

The degree to which the applicant and all proposed subrecipients demonstrate experience and capability to implement the Award; the applicant's management plan convincingly addresses the requirements; the staffing plan includes personnel positions with an appropriate balance of managerial, technical, and operational skills sufficient to successfully implement the Award, and the Key Personnel have appropriate skills and experience to provide effective leadership for the successful implementation of the Award, as laid out in Section A and Section D.5(e) of this RFA.

b) Business (Cost) Review

The Agency will evaluate the cost application of the applicant(s) under consideration for an award as a result of the merit criteria review to determine whether the costs are allowable in accordance with the cost principles found in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E.

The Agency will also consider (1) the extent of the applicant's understanding of the financial aspects of the program and the applicant's ability to perform the activities within the amount requested; (2) whether the applicant's plans will achieve the program objectives with reasonable economy and efficiency; and (3) whether any special conditions relating to costs should be included in the award.

Proposed cost share, if provided, will be reviewed for compliance with the standards set forth in 2 CFR 200.306, 2 CFR 700.10, and the Standard Provision "Cost Sharing (Matching)" for U.S. entities, or the Standard Provision "Cost Share" for non-U.S. entities.

The AO will perform a risk assessment (2 CFR 200.206). The AO may determine that a pre-award survey is required to inform the risk assessment in determining whether the prospective recipient has the necessary organizational, experience, accounting and operational controls, financial resources, and technical skills – or ability to obtain them – in order to achieve the objectives of the program and comply with the terms and conditions of the award. Depending on the result of the risk assessment, the AO will decide to execute the award, not execute the award, or award with “specific conditions” (2 CFR 200.208).

[END OF SECTION E]

SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

Award of the agreement contemplated by this RFA cannot be made until funds have been appropriated, allocated and committed through internal USAID procedures. While USAID anticipates that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential applicants are hereby notified of these requirements and conditions for the award.

2. Administrative & National Policy Requirements

The resulting award from this RFA will be administered in accordance with the following policies and regulations.

For US organizations: [ADS 303](#), [2 CFR 700](#), [2 CFR 200](#), and [Standard Provisions for U.S. Non-governmental organizations](#).

For Non-US organizations: [Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-governmental Organizations](#).

3. Reporting Requirements

The Recipient must adhere to all reporting requirements listed below. All plans and reports must be submitted in English. Documents must be submitted electronically by email. All reports must be submitted by the due date for review by the USAID Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) designated by the Agreement Officer. The Agreement Officer and designated Acquisition & Assistance Specialist must be copied on each submission. The Applicant will consult the AOR on the format and expected content of reports prior to submission.

a) PLANS

- 1) **Annual Work Plan**: The Recipient shall submit an Annual Work Plan of its activities during the first year of the program within 45 days of the effective date of this Award for review, comments, or suggestions to the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) who will respond with comments/revisions or the approval within 10 days after the Annual Work Plan is submitted. The Recipient shall then submit the revised Work Plan to the AOR for approval not later than 15 days from receipt of USAID's comments and/or suggestions. Subsequent Annual Work Plans shall be submitted 30 days prior to commencement of the subsequent year of the Cooperative Agreement. The Work Plan shall include a timeline and benchmark indicators for achieving the objectives of each component of the program, all major activities that will be undertaken, rationale behind these activities, anticipated results of these efforts and how they will be measured. A sub-section with details of collaboration with other USAID- funded programs and other donors shall also be included. A gender action plan is also required to be integrated as a component of the annual work plan,

The Recipient shall submit significant changes or revisions to the Work Plan to the USAID Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) for his/her approval.

2) **Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (MEL) Plan:** The Recipient shall submit a Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (MEL) Plan within 90 days of the effective date of the award to the USAID Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR). The Recipient shall establish realistic expectations for what the project can produce in its various phases of implementation. The MEL Plan shall at a minimum include, and not be limited to the following:

- (1) the results to be achieved by the program.
- (2) qualitative or quantitative indicators to be used to measure achievement of the results.
- (3) the method of data collection to be used to obtain the indicator data.
- (4) baseline data and targets for each indicator by year.

The Recipient shall consult with USAID and the Impact Evaluation team while developing its MELP. Once developed, the MELP will be submitted to USAID for review and approved by the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR).

3) **Close-out/Demobilization Plan:** Four months prior to the completion date of the Cooperative Agreement, a close-out/demobilization plan must be submitted to the USAID Agreement Officer for Approval with a copy to the AOR. The Plan must outline a clear phase-out exit strategy and timeline of execution, including a description of the methodology it will use in determining areas and levels of sustainability. The plan will also include a list of actions that are typically required for close-out activities to ensure that all activities are completed; conduct an analysis of progress to date and, if necessary, expedite timelines to ensure completion. The close-out plan must include:

- Current financial status report with a thorough pipeline analysis to ensure that there are sufficient funds available to finalize activities and complete all requirements.
- Final Financial Status Report timeline.
- A final inventory of residual non-expendable property, which was acquired or furnished under the cooperative agreement.
- A disposition report of the following types of property, along with a proposed disposition of such property: (1) All equipment that has a per unit current fair market value at the end of this award of \$5,000 or more; (2) New/unused supplies with an aggregate current fair market value at the end of this award of \$5,000 or more. The plan will include proposed beneficiaries of the property as well as schedule for the transfers.
- A request for disposition instructions for any property acquired or furnished by the Government under the activity.
- Subcontractor/sub grantee/partnership phase out plan.
- Status of all program audit reports per the instrument's provisions.
- Final audit report timeline.
- Personnel phase-out timeline (who is expected to serve until when).
- Personnel phase-out plan (to include severance pay plan).

b) Financial Reporting:

1. **Quarterly Financial Reports:** The Recipient shall submit the Standard Form (SF) SF-425 Federal Financial Report on a quarterly basis to the Financial Management Office and Agreement Officer's Representative, within 30 days following the end of each fiscal year quarter, regardless of the effective date of the Agreement. Each financial form shall be identified by the appropriate award number.
2. **Final Financial Report:** The original of the final financial report shall be submitted to the Paying Office, the Agreement Officer and the Agreement Officer's Representative not later than 90 calendar days after the estimated completion date of this award.

c) Program Performance Reporting

- 1) **Quarterly Performance Reports:** The Recipient shall submit Quarterly Program Performance Reports to USAID during the duration of this Award. The quarterly performance reports are due 30 calendar days following the end of each fiscal year quarter, regardless of the effective date of the Agreement. Depending on the project start date, the first quarterly report may include somewhat more or less than one quarter's activities. The Recipient shall submit one copy of each Quarterly Program Performance Reports to the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) for her/his review and approval.

The quarterly reports shall describe project accomplishments and the progress made during the reporting period, include information on all activities, both ongoing and completed during the quarter, as well as any issues or problems that are affecting the delivery or timing of services provided by the Recipient. The reports shall also briefly present the following information:

- (i) Reasons why established goals were not met, if applicable.
- (ii) Other pertinent information including the status of finances and expenditures and, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.

The Recipient will report on activity performance quarterly, using a format agreed to with the AOR. The Recipient is encouraged to consult with the USAID Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) in finalizing the reports.

- 2) **Annual Performance Report:** The annual performance report shall include the fourth quarter performance report and is due 30 calendar days following the end of each fiscal year. Annual Report will include performance reporting for the last quarter (July through September) as well as aggregated reporting for the entire fiscal year and will include the elements listed above, as well as a description of key lessons learned and how the lessons will be used to inform the coming year's Annual Work Plan. The annual report will also include the following information:

- An Executive Summary of major findings, challenges, and achievements

- Extent to which objectives and results in the Annual Work Plan were achieved;
- Highlights of major achievements.
- Significant implementation problems and challenges encountered during the year (if applicable) and mitigation measures taken to address these.
- Description of efforts to ensure coordination, collaboration, and information sharing during the reporting period and any problems encountered, agreements reached, and/or actions taken to ensure coordination with relevant stakeholders.
- Description of efforts and progress achieved with activities to address gender issues.
- Description of efforts and progress achieved with regards to sustainability of project activities.
- Progress achieved regarding MEL Plan indicators and targets for the fourth quarter and the entire fiscal year.
- Lessons learned, observations, and recommendations that might be relevant to the design and implementation of other related activities.
- Success stories, highlighting the role of USAID and the American people in improving opportunities for Serbia. Success stories must include quality photos that will be shared for public outreach purposes.

3) **Ad hoc, Interim Reporting:** Events may occur between the scheduled performance reporting dates that have significant impact upon the activity. In such cases, the Recipient must notify the AOR and AO as soon as the following types of conditions become known:

- Problems, delays, or adverse conditions, which will materially impair the ability to meet the objective of the Federal award. This disclosure must include a statement of the action taken, or contemplated, and any assistance needed to resolve the situation.
- Waste, fraud, or abuse detected in the activity, and actions being taken to investigate the situation as well as to mitigate future occurrences. This reporting does NOT absolve the Recipient of the duty to disclose waste, fraud, or abuse to the USAID Inspector General Hotline (ig.hotline@usaid.gov); and
- Events or conditions that could have negative political or public relations perceptions affecting the activity. These include statements in the press or on social media, relationships with local officials or actors, etc. The Recipient will work with the AOR to determine a response strategy and to assist in mitigating any negative effects.

On the other hand, the Ad hoc reporting might also be required occasionally by the AOR, such as for example during Portfolio Review, or asking for a Monthly Success Story to be submitted for the purpose of promoting our activities in Washington, or similar events.

Regular activity monitoring events and communication will be established between the Implementing partner and the AOR.

4) **Final Report:** The Recipient is required to submit a Final Report within 90 calendar days following the estimated completion or termination date of this award. The final performance report shall contain at a minimum the following information:

- (i) An executive summary of the accomplishments and results achieved.
- (ii) An in-depth analysis of progress and results that synthesizes achievements that contributed towards program objectives. This section should clearly describe activities, major accomplishments and results achieved under the award.
- (iii) Final data, compared to baseline data, for all indicators included in the monitoring, learning and evaluation plan. This section should include disaggregated data by gender, regions, disenfranchised groups and other relevant groups identified.
- (iv) A summary of problems/obstacles encountered during the implementation, and how those obstacles were addressed and overcome if appropriate.
- (v) Lessons learned, best practices, and other findings from the implementation of the program, along with recommendations for future programming under each of the program objectives.

A list of all reports, publications, evaluations, and information and media products produced under this agreement, as well as confirmation that all products were submitted to the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC). For DEC submission instructions, see Standard Provision M.8 for Non-US NGOs and M.21 for US NGOs, entitled “SUBMISSIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE CLEARINGHOUSE AND PUBLICATIONS (JUNE 2012)”.

4. Environmental Compliance

- (a) The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, Section 117 requires that the impact of USAID’s activities on the environment be considered and that USAID include environmental sustainability as a central consideration in designing and carrying out its development programs. This mandate is codified in Federal Regulations (22 CFR 216) and in USAID’s Automated Directives System (ADS) Chapters 201 (<http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/201.pdf>) and 204 (<http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/204.pdf>), which, in part, require that the potential environmental impacts of USAID-financed activities are identified prior to a final decision to proceed and that appropriate environmental safeguards are adopted for all activities. The Recipient’s environmental compliance obligations under these regulations and procedures are specified in the following paragraphs of this cooperative agreement.
- (b) In addition, the Recipient must comply with host country environmental regulations unless otherwise directed in writing by USAID. In case of conflict between host country and USAID regulations, the latter shall govern.
- (c) No activity funded under this cooperative agreement will be implemented unless an environmental threshold determination, as defined by 22 CFR 216, has been reached for that activity, as documented in the approved Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE).
- (d) Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE) **DCN: 2021-SRB-004** has been approved for this activity, see Attachment 2 to this RFA. It has been determined that the activity is fully within the class of Categorical Exclusions. As per 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2), neither an Initial Environmental Examination, nor an Environmental Assessment is required for an activity

which is determined to fall within one or more of the categories listed at 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2)(i) education, technical assistance or training programs; and at 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2)(iii) analysis, studies, academic research, workshops and meetings.

- (e) As part of its Annual Work Plan, the Recipient, in collaboration with the AOR and Mission Environmental Officer (MEO), shall review all ongoing and planned activities under this cooperative agreement to determine if they are within the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation. If the Recipient plans any new activities outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation, it shall prepare an amendment to the documentation for USAID review and approval. No such new activities shall be undertaken prior to receiving written USAID approval of environmental documentation amendments. Any ongoing activities found to be outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation shall be halted until an amendment to the documentation is submitted and written approval is received from USAID.
- (f) Subaward Provision: A provision for subawards is included under this award; therefore, the Recipient will be required to use an Environmental Screening Report (ESR) or Environmental Review (ER) checklist using impact assessment tools to screen grant proposals to ensure the funded proposals will result in no adverse environmental impact, to develop mitigation measures, as necessary, and to specify monitoring and reporting. Use of the ERF or ER checklist is called for when the nature of the grant proposals to be funded is not well enough known to make an informed decision about their potential environmental impacts, yet due to the type and extent of activities to be funded, any adverse impacts are expected to be easily mitigated. Implementation of sub-grant activities cannot go forward until the ERF or ER checklist is completed and approved by USAID. Recipient is responsible for ensuring that mitigation measures specified by the ESR or ER checklist process are implemented.

The Recipient will be responsible for periodic reporting to the USAID AOR, as specified in this award.

[END OF SECTION F]

SECTION G: FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

1. RFA Points of Contact

See Section D.1

2. Acquisition and Assistance Ombudsman

The A&A Ombudsman helps ensure equitable treatment of all parties who participate in USAID's acquisition and assistance process. The A&A Ombudsman serves as a resource for all organizations who are doing or wish to do business with USAID. Please visit this page for additional information: <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/acquisition-assistance-ombudsman>

[The A&A Ombudsman may be contacted via: Ombudsman@usaid.gov](mailto:Ombudsman@usaid.gov)

[END OF SECTION G]

SECTION H: OTHER INFORMATION

USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. Any award and subsequent incremental funding will be subject to the availability of funds and continued relevance to Agency programming.

Applications with Proprietary Data

Applicants who include data that they do not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the U.S. Government except for evaluation purpose, should mark the cover page with the following:

“This application includes data that must not be duplicated, used, or disclosed – in whole or in part – for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, an award is made as a result of – or in connection with – the submission of this data, the U.S. Government will have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting award. This restriction does not limit the U.S. Government’s right to use information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in sheets {insert sheet numbers}.”

Additionally, the applicant must mark each sheet of data it wishes to restrict with the following:

“Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this application.”

[END OF SECTION H]

SECTION I: STANDARD PROVISIONS

(Note: the full text of these provisions may be found at: <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303maa> and <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mab>). The actual Standard Provisions included in the award will be dependent on the organization that is selected. The award will include the latest Mandatory Provisions for either U.S. or non-U.S. Nongovernmental organizations. The award will also contain the following “required as applicable” Standard Provisions:

Please note that the resulting award will include all standard provisions (both mandatory and required as applicable) in full text.

[END OF SECTION I]